



MEDIA RELEASE

Phil Koperberg

NSW Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water

LEVEL FOUR RESTRICTIONS FOR MURRAY AND MURRUMBIDGEE START ON SUNDAY

State Plan Priority E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users

Tuesday 26th June 2007

The lemma Government today reminded towns along the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers that Level Four water restrictions should come into force from Sunday July 1.

Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water Phil Koperberg today said that it is important for towns to implement the restrictions and encouraged them to finalise plans to conserve water.

“Despite recent rains 80 per cent of NSW remains drought affected and where we have had rain the inflows have done little to improve water storage levels in many catchments,” Mr Koperberg said.

“As a result there is insufficient water at this stage to make any allocation to general and high security licence holders in the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Lower Darling valleys for 2007-08

“In these valleys, water is being allocated for essential industries on a month by month basis to ensure the viability of businesses and jobs.

“That’s why we’ll continue working closely with local communities to help them manage reduced or zero allocations and advising them to bring water restrictions in from Sunday.

“Specific restrictions under Level Four can vary slightly across jurisdictions but in general it means no outside watering, other than with greywater, and no filling of swimming pools.

“Level Four restrictions should have little impact on lawns and gardens during July and August, but the water saved will increase that available to industries and to support local jobs.

“The restrictions may be relaxed after the winter but this will depend on rainfall and inflow into water storages during the coming months,” he said.

Mr Koperberg said the lemma Government was meeting its commitments to southern irrigators with the first payments under the \$20 million package approved and more than 1,200 applicants receiving financial assistance.

“Payments totalling approximately \$17 million have been made to 1,224 irrigators who accepted funding under the Extraordinary Assistance Program (EAP) established earlier this year,” Mr Koperberg said.

“It provides up to \$50,000 in financial assistance to farmers in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys who had access to their carry-over and high security water accounts suspended last year.

“Irrigators who successfully apply for funding under the Program will receive a cash payment of \$100 per megalitre of water which has been suspended.

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“This money will help families affected by the decision to continue to pay the bills and remain viable until substantial rainfall arrives.

“The assistance is available both to farmers who receive water under a water licence, and farmers who receive water from irrigation corporations,” he said.

“I’m also aware some irrigators have been concerned that if they sign up to the assistance package they would lose their water entitlements.

“I can assure irrigators that this is simply not the case – the restricted water will be made available for use as soon as possible.”

Mr Koperberg also confirmed the NSW Government would not be waiving or deferring fixed water charges for irrigators on the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers.

“We acknowledge that rural communities and farmers are doing it tough and we’re working with them to get through this crisis,” Mr Koperberg said.

“There’s currently no case to support deferring or waiving fixed charges – these fees pay for the upkeep of water infrastructure including the major dams, and to manage the river to provide water to users.

“And this infrastructure still needs to be kept in good order through the drought – that’s why there will be no change to the fees at this stage.

“The precedent of the Lachlan Valley involved a zero general security allocation for three out of five years, while the Murray Valley has had a zero general security allocation one year and the Murrumbidgee Valley has had an allocation for general security in each year.

“We’ll continue to monitor the situation as it develops and keep working with irrigators and rural communities to assist them get through this situation,” he said.

Contact: Matt Martyn-Jones 0419 418 394 or (02) 9995 6750

2007-08 Water Outlook for NSW

Murrumbidgee Valley

- sufficient water under level 4 water restrictions to provide 12 months town water supply and meet critical stock, domestic and industry needs
- insufficient water to meet general and high security needs

Murray Valley

- sufficient water under level 4 water restrictions to provide 12 months town water supply and meet critical stock, domestic and industry needs to September only
- insufficient water to meet general and high security needs

Lower Darling

- sufficient water to provide 18 months town water supply to Broken Hill and meet critical stock and domestic needs
- insufficient water to meet general and high security needs
- water available to meet survival needs of permanent plantings only

Lachlan

- sufficient water to meet 70% of town water supply, 15% of stock and domestic (to be reviewed after three months), and 10% of high security needs (to be reviewed after three months)
- insufficient water to meet general security needs

Macquarie

- sufficient water to meet 70% of town water supply, 50% of stock and domestic, and 10% of high security needs (to be reviewed after three months)
- insufficient water to meet general security needs
- sufficient groundwater to meet 100% of licensed entitlements

Cudgegong

- sufficient water to meet 80% of town water supply, 80% of high security and stock and domestic needs, and 25% of general security water carried over from 2006-07

Peel

- sufficient water to meet 60% of town water supply, 50% of stock and domestic, and 50% of high security needs
- insufficient water to meet general security needs

Namoi

- sufficient water to meet 100% of town water supply, stock and domestic, and high security needs and access to all general security water carried-over from 2006-07
- sufficient groundwater to meet 100% of licensed entitlements

Gwydir

- sufficient water to meet 100% of town water supply, stock and domestic, and high security needs and access to all general security water carried-over from 2006-07
- sufficient groundwater to meet 100% of licensed entitlements

Border Rivers

- sufficient water to meet 100% of town water supply, stock and domestic, and high security needs and access to all general security water carried-over from 2006-07

Hunter and Central Coast

- sufficient water to meet 100% of town water supply, stock and domestic needs, and 75% of high security needs
- insufficient water to meet general security needs, however these licence holders can carryover unused water, up to 10% of their entitlements from 2006-07
- sufficient groundwater to meet 100% of licensed entitlements